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COMMUNISM IN SOUTH INDIA: QUARTERLY  
REVIEW FOR THIRD QUARTER OF 1954.

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## FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

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FROM AMCONSUL, Madras, India

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DESP. NO.

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

November 10, 1954

DATE

REF : Madras D-476 of March 1, D-639 of May 19, and D-79 of August 4, 1954; and New Delhi D-168 of October 21, 1954.

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SUBJECT: COMMUNISM IN SOUTH INDIA: Quarterly Review for Third Quarter of 1954.

**SUMMARY:** Review of the Embassy's "Review of Quarterly Despatches on Communism" (New Delhi's reference despatch) leaves an impression that our quarterly reviews may have underestimated, and almost certainly underemphasized, the strength of the Communist Party in South India. This quarterly review is, therefore, built around available evidence that the Communist Party remains an important factor in South Indian politics; that it may, in fact, be gaining in importance; and that it, unfortunately, continues to develop as the principal party alternative to the Congress. The activity of the Andhra CP, the latent strength of the Communists in Madras State - which proved itself quite real in the recent district board elections in the Malabar district - , and reports of an increase in Communist strength in Travancore-Cochin suggest a conclusion that Communist strength in South India is not waning and that the probabilities are that its vote appeal is increasing. We believe the Party is becoming more militant and that this militancy is finding reward in a small increase in membership. Decline in PSP prestige, Congress complacency and Congress' neglect of the mass approach, especially at the village level, confirm our suspicion that the Communist appeal greatly overleaps CP membership.

Items of major interest in connection with Communist activity in South India during the past quarter are: (1) the defeat of the Prakasam Ministry in Andhra, (2) the Communist victory in the District Board elections in the Malabar district of Madras, (3) the reported increase of Communist strength in Travancore-Cochin, and (4) decline in prestige, especially in Madras and T-C of the PSP as an alternative to the Congress.

## A. DEFEAT OF THE PRAKASAM MINISTRY IN ANDHRA.

The defeat of the Prakasam Ministry is reported separately. It should be noted here, however, that the no-confidence motion on which the ministry was defeated was initiated by the Communist Party and that the fall of the ministry represents a culmination of lengthy Communist effort and the capability of the Communists to enlist non-Congress support.

The no-confidence

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The no-confidence motion was the subject of a protracted debate within the Communist Party itself for there was a difference of opinion as to whether the interests of the Party would be better served by continuance of the present Legislative Assembly or its dissolution. We do not know whether the expulsion/resignations during recent months were connected with this debate but these expulsion/resignations apparently solidified the control of BASAVA PUNNIAH and his lieutenants, M HANUMANTHA RAO and CHANDRA SEKHARA RAO. These three men are members of the nine-man Secretariat of the Andhra Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of India (CPI). The Secretariat argued in a report dated 22 July 1954 (see Enclosure 1 to Madras D-181 of September 20, 1954) that the Government should be defeated. Whether intentional or not, the expulsion/resignations would appear to have had the effect of unifying the Andhra Communist Party behind the Secretariat on the issue of defeating the Government.

While there continue to be significant differences in the Andhra CP, defeat of the Government now leads us to believe that the extent and effects of Andhra intra-party strife may have been overestimated. This is further supported by the Party's ability to hold a large number of organizational and agitational meetings. During the early part of the quarter under review, there were numerous Communist-organized village, municipal, district, and taluk meetings at which new officers were elected and party policy explained. During the last week of October, there were numerous agitational meetings called in response to a Party circular instructing local units to hold meetings to criticize the Government and to bring pressure upon members of the Legislative Assembly to support the no-confidence motion. Our present view is also supported by the claim of the Andhra CP Secretariat in the report referred to above that its membership has increased.

The ability of the Communists to pull together on the no-confidence motion, to increase their Party membership, and to hold a large number of agitational and organizational meetings, all appear to indicate that the Party is functioning as an effective political entity despite the continued rumors of a Party split. Though intra-Party frictions may continue, we suspect the Andhra CP would present a hard-hitting united front in the event of general elections.

Thus, in spite of the expulsion/resignation of dissident Communists and reports of a split in the Andhra CP, there are evidences that it is regaining its dynamic and that its discipline is also being re-established. In short, the Party appears to be stronger now than it was at the beginning of the year and we believe its organizational strength will continue to increase, especially if general elections for a new Assembly are called.

- 1/ The dissident Communists under C.V.K. RAO now control five votes in the Andhra Legislative Assembly. The conference of dissidents (reported in Madras D-92 of August 11, 1954) planned for August 21, was held and the result was the formation of the People's Democratic Front. We have no other details concerning the conference, the PDF, the PDF program or its membership.

#### B. COMMUNIST ACTIVITY

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**B. COMMUNIST ACTIVITY IN MADRAS STATE.**

We have little information on the activity of Communists in Madras State during the quarter under review and no information on their increase or decrease in membership. The only clue we have to the strength of the Party in Madras is the results of the District Board elections. The results of the elections are being analyzed in a separate report but in the interests of completeness are referred to here briefly. In the Tamil-speaking areas covered by the Tamil Nad Provincial Committee, the Communists put forth no special effort and the Congress won all but a handful of seats. Nevertheless, the Communists were the principle opposition and in voting strength overshadowed the PSP. In the Malayalam-speaking area covered by the Malabar District Committee (which currently stands in the same relation to the CC as a provincial committee), the Communists put forth vigorous efforts. They succeeded in winning a larger number of seats than any other party, capturing 18 as against 15 for the Congress. The Communist candidates, plus the Communist-supported independents, won a total of 24 seats or one-half of the seats at stake. Throughout the whole of Madras State, the Communist vote was 15.3 per cent (an increase of double that of the general elections of 1952) as against a PSP vote of 6.6 per cent.

We conclude from this that the Communists continue to have formidable potential strength in Madras State and that when they make a determined effort to win an election this potential strength can be converted into sufficient actual strength to threaten the Congress seriously. The results of the Gudiyatham by-election in which Chief Minister KAMARAJ NADAR recently stood for election to the Madras Legislative Assembly support this conclusion. Every resource at the command of the Congress was brought to bear on the Gudiyatham election for the specific purpose of humbling the Communists and enhancing the prestige of KAMARAJ. The Communist effort, on the other hand, was negligible. In spite of this, the Communist candidate received nearly thirty thousand votes of a total of ninety thousand - or 30 per cent. This is impressive in absolute terms and more impressive when considered in terms of the relative efforts expended by the contending parties and the fact that the district has never been a Communist stronghold.

**C. COMMUNIST ACTIVITY IN TRAVANCORE-COCHIN STATE.**

The results of the Malabar District Board elections are an indicator of the position of the Travancore-Cochin State Communist Party. The Malabar district of Madras State, like Travancore-Cochin, is a Malayalam-speaking area. Malabar like T-C is located in the narrow coastal area between the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea and the economic problems, literacy, and degree of unemployment are similar. Hence, the success of the Communists in Malabar may be indicative of the current position of the T-C State Communist Party. Likewise, the decline of PSP vote-getting strength in the Malabar elections, coupled with the present difficulties of the PSP ministry in T-C, indicate a build-up of the Communists as the principal party alternative to the Congress.

In assessing the

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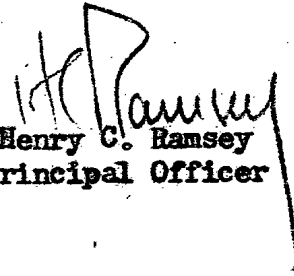
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In assessing the present strength of the T-C Communists, it should be noted that, as in the previous quarterly summary, there has been a shift in the top level personnel of the T-C Party. T. V. THOMAS was replaced as trade union leader by M. N. GOVINDA NAIR, who in turn was replaced as Secretary of the T-C Party by C. ACHUTHA MENON. This is generally interpreted to mean that the T-C Party has adopted a more militant line.

These two factors lead us to believe ~~unreliable~~ reports that Communist strength in T-C has increased and that their Assembly position would be significantly improved if new elections were to be held now. This is confirmed by what we have been told is a Congress Party estimate of the present situation. It finds further support in a belief that those who are disappointed in the PSP will gravitate towards the Communists.

#### D. CONCLUSIONS

A review of the events of the last quarter support conclusions that (1) the reshuffling of the top level personalities in T-C and the emergence of PUNNIAH, HANUMANTHA RAO, and CHANDRA SEKHARA RAO in Andhra represent shifts toward more militancy and more effective Party discipline, (2) far from being a negligible factor or one that is on the wane, Communist strength in South India shows signs of increasing, and (3) there may be a small actual increase in Party membership.

  
Henry C. Ramsey  
Principal Officer

cc: New Delhi  
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